



North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

Priority Points

December 7, 2012

Happy Holidays!

As 2012 comes to a close, our team at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) wishes each of you the very best during the holiday season! Much work has been accomplished during the first semester of the 2012-13 school year and we are continually impressed with the level of dedication demonstrated in our NC Priority Schools. I hope that this season allows you the opportunity to reflect on the successes thus far achieved and enjoy some time with family and friends.

We received very encouraging feedback from the Priority Schools Forum held in Summerfield, NC on November 15, 2012. Participants were quite pleased with both the format and content, and we do appreciate the comments that were included in the online survey. As a result of your feedback, and in the spirit of the season, we have several *resolutions* for the upcoming year. These include:

- Providing customized support around Indistar (see the webinar and “Walk-In Review” schedules noted below);
- Identifying sustainability models under development in our SIG/Priority Schools and provide networking opportunities around this topic;
- Continuing our efforts around alignment of programs (crosswalking with Race to the Top, Title I, Responsiveness to Instruction, etc.); and
- Collaborating with the North Carolina Association of Alternative Learning Programs (NCAALP) in support of our many alternative sites identified under SIG/Priority.

Transitioning from SIG to Priority

Seventy-seven (77) schools now comprise the State’s list of “priority schools.” In addition to forty (40) schools implementing a school intervention model under the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program, North Carolina identified thirty-seven (37) schools according to the Priority School methodology stated in the North Carolina Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Request (ESEA Flex) submitted and approved by the U.S. Department of Education in May of 2012.

As required, Priority Schools must choose one of two options: 1) to implement one of the four SIG models; or 2) to implement meaningful interventions that align to all turnaround principles and are selected with teacher, family and community involvement.

LEAs with SIG schools have continued to fully implement the intervention model approved in the LEA SIG application – turnaround, transformation, restart, or closure. Additionally, Priority Schools also identified under Race to the Top have continued to fully implement their chosen intervention model.



At the end of the 2012-13 school year, our first cohort of SIG schools (23 schools) will have completed their grant cycle. However, these schools will continue to be identified and served under the Priority School “umbrella” for two additional years. This will allow them to receive both ongoing support from DPI and additional school improvement funding that may be used to address sustainability. DPI will continue to support the implementation of interventions through the use of the NC Indistar® Tool and on-site reviews will be scheduled as needed to review progress in each school.

North Carolina Indistar – What’s Next??? – From Assessment to Planning

Priority Schools have now completed (at a minimum) an assessment of each of the 28 Key Indicators in NC Indistar. We now move from the assessment phase to planning. As you make this transition, some key points to remember are as follows:

- Indicators are referred to as “Objectives” in the planning process.
- Teams may create plans for indicators listed as “No Development, Will Include” and “Limited Development.”
- Indicators assessed as “Fully Implemented” will not appear in this phase.

To create a plan for an Objective, the team:

- assigns a team member to be responsible for the Objective
- describes how the Objective will look in the school when it is fully implemented
- describes what they will need to gather to provide evidence when it is fully implemented
- creates tasks to reach the Objective

For each task created, the team:

- describes the tasks
- assigns a person to complete the task
- establishes a date for completion

Last summer, as many revisions were occurring, including a reduction of indicators and an overall “facelift”, our work team at DPI consulted with our Priority Schools Advisory members regarding the requirements for the “planning” phase. Should DPI require that plans be developed for all 28 Key Indicators during 2012-13? Should DPI require a specific or “magic” number? It was determined that this is a decision to be made on a school by school basis. While some of our schools are prepared to create plans around 10-15 indicators, others may need to focus on 3-4 at this point to ensure fidelity before moving on. The key requirement for our LEAs to consider is that plans must be developed and implemented for each of the 28 Key Indicators over the next three years. The school level team, working



with the LEA Priority School Coordinator and the DPI Quality Reviewer, should consistently review progress and map out the overall timeline and benchmarking strategies.

As a result of feedback received during and following the Priority Schools Forum, DPI is offering several opportunities for technical assistance beginning in January 2013.

Priority School Webinar Forums – webinars will be conducted on a monthly basis throughout the spring semester. While a featured topic will be offered during these webinars, our purpose is to allow Priority School representatives the opportunity to ask questions of DPI and of one another in an open forum format. Registration information will be provided prior to each session and the registration link for the first webinar is noted below.

Priority Schools Webinar Schedule

January 11, 2013 ([click here for registration](#))

February 15, 2013

March 8, 2013

April 19, 2013

NC Indistar Walk-In Reviews – During the month of January, DPI will offer NC Indistar “Walk-In Reviews” on a regional basis for all Priority Schools. Representatives from each school will be asked to sign up for an hour long consultation at one of the following regional sites. Participants will have the opportunity to review current plans, have questions addressed, and discuss potential next steps. Each school/LEA will be allowed to have up to three team members attend the session (e.g., Principal, Process Mgr., LEA Priority School Coordinator). The schedule is noted below.

NC Indistar Walk-In Reviews

January 16, 2013	Guilford County
January 17, 2013	Richmond County
January 23, 2013	Wake County (NCDPI 6 th Floor – Room 695)
January 25, 2013	Pitt County
January 30, 2013	Mecklenburg County
January 31, 2013	Buncombe County

To register for one of the above sessions, please complete a [brief survey by clicking here](#) prior to January 4, 2013.

Also, many LEAs/schools have requested individualized training and support regarding NC Indistar. If you would like to request an NC Indistar session, please contact Diane Antolak at diane.antolak@dpi.nc.gov.



U.S. Department of Education Monitoring (ED)

During the week of February 4-8, 2013 the U.S. Department of Education (ED) will conduct an on-site SIG Monitoring visit in North Carolina that will include a review of the SEA and at least two LEAs to be determined. According to the ED SIG Monitoring Plan:

Monitoring States' implementation of programs provides an opportunity to examine how States have instituted policies, systems, and procedures to ensure LEA and school compliance with the statute and regulations. Monitoring serves many purposes:

- Formalizes the shared responsibility of ED and the States to improve student achievement and close the achievement gap in order to have all students reach proficiency.
- Provides a vehicle for the Office of School Turnaround's legal responsibility to monitor the implementation of Title I, section 1003(g).
- Ensures that States and school districts provide critical information to parents that enable them to be full partners in their children's education.
- Provides data that inform technical assistance that supports States' and school districts' efforts to improve teaching and learning.
- Provides data to inform ED's policy and national leadership activities.

SIG monitoring, in particular, provides the opportunity to assess early and ongoing implementation efforts and to identify areas where States and LEAs need additional assistance to support effective implementation of turnaround efforts in schools.

Our partners at ED have worked extremely hard to establish a culture of collaboration with our State and we do look forward to the opportunity to share our successes and challenges with them in February.

NC Priority Schools Advisory Members

- Dan Gilfort, Principal, Durham Performance Learning Center;
- Judy Leahy, SIG Coordinator, Gaston County Schools;
- Alana Hix, Executive Director of Federal Programs, Cumberland County Schools;
- Ron Thompson (Retired), Executive Director, Federal and State Compliance, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools;
- Tonya Faison, Principal, Goldsboro High School; and
- Cedric Gerald, Instructional Coach, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

Advisory members advise in the development of state Priority School policies and procedures and offer ongoing feedback regarding state monitoring and support efforts.



Web Resources

- **Indistar** – A redesigned website is now available at www.indistar.org. Please note that powerpoints are posted for each phase of the Indistar process in addition to other valuable resources. An Indistar Handbook is also available at: <http://www.indistar.org/gettingstarted/>
- The United States Department of Education has re-launched the **School Turnaround Learning Community** (<http://www.schoolturnaroundsupport.org/>). The site features improved chat and search functions and a user-friendly reorganization of resources, aimed at allowing state, district, school, and community leaders to discuss innovative strategies and share promising practices. To date, the site has some 4,300 members, offers over 500 school turnaround resources, and has hosted nearly 60 webinars on critical topics, including early learning, increased learning time, teacher and leader effectiveness, family and community engagement, and supporting secondary and rural schools.
- The **School Improvement Grants** website is available within the Federal Program Monitoring Section site located at: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/program-monitoring/grants/>. SIG Applications and summary information by school/LEA is available at the site, as well as Non-Regulatory Guidance from the US Department of Education (USED).

**For additional information regarding Priority Schools in North Carolina, please contact [George Hancock](#) at 919-807-3911 or [Donna Brown](#) at 919-807-3957.